

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING MARCH 7, 2016

HB 5497

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SUPPORT OF HB 5497 AA REQUIRING
A PUBLICALLY ACCESIBLE LIST OF LEGISLATIVELY APPOINTED
BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COUNSILS**

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and members of the GAE Committee, my name is Paddi LeShane and I'm a registered lobbyist in CT and I am here today to thank you for raising this proposed legislation and state that I fully support the measure.

This bill would readily make available critical information necessary for all registered lobbyists to fulfill their obligations under the State's Ethics reporting statutes.

Many may not know that registered lobbyists must also report certain expenditures that benefit persons appointed by members of the legislature to serve as volunteers on boards, commissions or any entities that are determined to have a decision making role in state policy. It is nearly impossible to stay current with these appointments or even be aware that such appointments have been made by a legislator.

I am an active volunteer in my home town of Hartford as well as several organizations that serve the Greater Hartford Region as a member of their board of directors, an officer in the organization and very often as a community fundraiser for deserving organizations. There are many, many times where I serve on a committee for a fundraising event, sit on a board of directors for a nonprofit entity and I will host a luncheon, breakfast or

reception for persons also engaged in the event planning, governance of the organization or as a “friend” raiser.

In such circumstance I will underwrite the cost of food and beverages for the planning event, reception or board meeting but never know that someone in attendance was a legislatively appointed member of a board, commission or council. It's not an easy task to find out this information since even those appointed do not realize they are potentially reportable person under the state statutes. More often than not they are unaware of exactly what my profession does or that I am a registered lobbyist. They see me as a small women business owner, community volunteer, or simply a supporter of an organization that they too support.

At Sullivan & LeShane we take great pride in keeping meticulous records of all events, receptions, activities or functions that we host and underwrite where food and beverages are served as well as any entertainment/ sports events that we may support. Even with our lists and data management records it's virtually impossible to know who has been appointed by an individual legislator to serve on the hundreds and hundreds of boards, commissions, and councils set up in CT.

Several years ago I met with the Office of State Ethics team to discuss how to best collect and make available this information. It had concern me that through a random audit of our records that several volunteer friends had attended a holiday party and that while we recorded and reported dozens of folks who were known to us thru their employment with the state and or their elected office, the auditors googled a random list of names and several people showed up as being appointed to serve on a board, commission and or council by a legislator! These individuals were invited to the reception through our service on the board of directors, members of a gala fundraising event or service on women's leadership organizations. I never knew they were appointed by a legislator to anything! We never talked politics or for that matter legislative matters or matters related to their

appointment. We worked together to help other organizations reach their goals and serve their members, clients or community.

During one summer we had a member of our team research and catalogue all boards, commissions and councils. WE met again with the OSE to review the list and confirmed they were all entities that we should keep tabs on. Now each session we review any new board, commission or council with OSE to see if they need to be added to our list.

We make every attempt to keep current the individual appointed to serve on these organizations but I have to say its very, very time consuming and just when we think it's up to date... it's not. So we recap everyone who attended an event we sponsor or that I personally sponsor keep lists of attendees, our business manager googles names of anyone who attends an event on our attendance list to see if their names show up on an internet search and make the notation in our data base and notify them, report them if required or seek reimbursement if they choose not to be reported.

As I have said earlier many, many are not aware of what I do or that they themselves are reportable individuals under the CT laws. Off session a member of our team scours through the legislative library's records as well as the names of persons serving on the boards, commissions and councils appointed by the Governor or other state wide elected official to at least TRY to keep current and up to date so that we can be compliant with our periodic reporting requirements.

We work closely with our clients to ensure they at least are aware of this requirement and help them where at all possible to stay compliant too.

Believe me, this is a nearly impossible standard to meet if a lobbyist or a client lobbyist is highly engaged in the communities where they live or work.

The creation of a publically assessable list of such legislative appointments and might I suggest **amending the language to include any and all appointments deemed by the OSE to be reportable under the CT State Ethic laws** would at least give a registered lobbyist and or a registered client lobbyist a fighting chance to comply to the letter of the law.

You may not realize that in addition to the reporting functions required of lobbyists and client lobbyists we are also required to notify reportable individuals if expenses are higher than a statutory limit, allow for reimbursement as well as seek reimbursement of expenditures over \$10 from the individual or report them as benefiting from the lobbyist or client lobbyist expense. Establishing this data based will be extremely helpful. It is much needed in order for us to faithfully comply with CTs ethics laws.

I thank you for your time and your interest in helping to better manage information necessary for strict compliance with the States ethics laws. I'd be happy to work with the committee further to achieve the goal of establishing a database with those individuals who are appointed by legislators and even the governor to serve on certain boards, commissions and councils which require registered lobbyists to report expenditure for their behalf.

Thank you.